

#210: NOVEMBER 2015

# THE INDYPENDER 15

A FREE PAPER FOR PEOPLE 2000  
2015

## JOURNEY TO A NEW LIFE

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**THE INDYPENDENT, INC.**  
388 Atlantic Avenue, 2nd Floor  
Brooklyn, NY 11217  
212-904-1282  
www.indypendent.org  
Twitter: @TheIndypendent  
facebook.com/TheIndypendent

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**  
Ellen Davidson, Anna Gold,  
Alina Mogilyanskaya,  
Ann Schneider, John Tarleton

**EXECUTIVE EDITOR:**  
John Tarleton

**MANAGING EDITOR:**  
Alina Mogilyanskaya

**CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:**  
Ellen Davidson,  
Nicholas Powers

**ILLUSTRATION DIRECTOR:**  
Frank Reynoso

**DESIGN DIRECTOR:**  
Mikael Tarkela

**DESIGNERS:**  
Steven Arnerich, Anna Gold

**CALENDAR EDITOR:**  
Seamus Creighton

**GENERAL INQUIRIES:**  
contact@indypendent.org

**SUBMISSIONS AND NEWS TIPS:**  
submissions@indypendent.org

**ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION:**  
ads@indypendent.org

**VOLUNTEER CONTRIBUTORS:** Sam Alcott, Claire Arkin, Bennett Baumer, Devika Bilimoria, Duane Bruton, José Carmona, Shawn Carrié, Hye Jin Chung, Annette Elizabeth, Renée Feltz, Ersellia Ferron, Daniel Fishel, Lynne Foster, Robert Gonyo, Elia Gran, Michael Grant, Kim Herbst, Michael Hirsch, David Hollenbach, Rebeca Ibarra, Dondi J, Mamoudou Keita, Margarita Kruchinskaya, Rob LaQuinta, Gary Martin, AnnMary Mathew, Erik McGregor, David Meadow, Mike Newton, Jackie O’Brien, Maya Peraza-Baker, Robert Pluma, Anna Polonyi, Andy Pugh, Conor Tomás Reed, Jim Secula, Andrew Stern, Gabriella Szpunt, Lisa Taylor, Cindy Trinh, Solange Uwimana, Maria Vassileva, Matthew Wasserman, Kevin Whipple, Beth Whitney, and Amy Wolf.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR



ERIK MCGREGOR

**SUNDAYS NOV 15–DEC 20**  
2pm • \$15  
**PERFORMANCE: THE EARTH WANTS YOU.** Join performance artist Reverend Billy Talen and the 50-member Stop Shopping Choir for their annual holiday show. With its wild anti-consumerism gospel shouting and its passionate embrace of Earth-friendly urban activism, this event is one of a kind. Can we have an Earth-alujah?!  
Joe’s Pub  
425 Lafayette St  
212-539-8778 • revbilly.com

**FRI NOV 13**  
6pm • Free  
**BOOK LAUNCH: *WARPED: GAY NORMALITY AND QUEER ANTI-CAPITALISM*.** Author Peter Tucker is a queer antiwar activist and a fellow at the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam. He’ll discuss his work on the speed of victories for LGBT rights and the developing pace of gay “normality” in relation to the continuing need for queer resistance and activism.  
NYU  
Silver Center  
31 Washington Pl, Rm 520  
773-583-7884 • haymarketbooks.org

**SAT NOV 14**  
1pm • Free  
**SCREENING: *RUBBLE KINGS*.** This powerful documentary focuses on early 1970s New York City youth and the influence they had on community change and the birth of hip-hop culture. A teen-centered dialogue with director Shan Nicholson will follow the screening. Priority seating for youth.  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture  
515 Malcolm X Blvd  
917-275-6975 • nypl.org

**SUN NOV 15**  
2pm • \$30 general/\$10 student  
**BENEFIT PARTY: GRAND OPENING CELEBRATION BENEFIT FOR REVOLUTION BOOKS.** Revolution Books has reopened in Harlem and will be hosting renowned Kenyan writer, post-colonial literary theorist and former political prisoner Ngugi wa Thiong’o at its opening party.  
473 Malcolm X Blvd  
212-691-3345  
revolutionbooksnyc.org

**WED NOV 18**  
2–5pm • Free  
**DISCUSSION: RIKERS ISLAND:**

**REFORM IT — OR SHUT IT DOWN?**  
A panel of community advocates, elected officials and professors will discuss the future of Rikers Island. Topics will include the reality of and barriers to reform, alternatives to large-scale incarceration facilities within the city and alternatives to incarcerating the mentally ill and adolescents in such facilities. Admission is free but RSVP is required.  
The New School  
The Auditorium  
66 W 12th St  
212.229.5600 • newschool.edu

**THUR NOV 19**  
7pm • Free  
**DISCUSSION: ARTISTS’ RESPONSES TO GENTRIFICATION.** Caroline Woolard of the NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative and Eric Lyle of *Streetopia* and *Scam* will discuss the responses of artists to gentrification.  
172 Allen St  
212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

**FRI NOV 20**  
7pm • \$5 suggested  
**EVENT: TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE.** This day honors the trans\* lives lost to oppression and violence. The event will include speakers, educational info and referrals to services. Registration is free on the website and is open to all who would like to express their support. Additional remembrance events will be hosted by the Audre Lorde Project, Wow Café Theater and others.  
The LGBT Center  
208 W 13th St  
212-620-7310 • gaycenter.org/tdor

**SAT NOV 21**  
7pm • Free  
**SCREENING AND TALK: *EVERY MOTHER’S SON*.** This Emmy-nominated documentary profiles three mothers whose sons were killed by the NYPD and find themselves united to seek justice and transform their grief into an opportunity for profound social change. Panelists will be Iris Baez, mother of Anthony Baez, who was killed in an illegal chokehold by NYPD officer Francis Livoti in 1994; King Downing, founder of the Human Rights-Racial Justice Center; and Tami Gold, award-winning filmmaker and activist.  
Align Brooklyn  
579 5th Ave, Bklyn  
718-788-3940

**WED DEC 2**  
7:30pm • Free  
**READING & DISCUSSION: *SHAPE-SHIFTERS*.** Author Aimee Meredith Cox will read from her debut book, in which she explores how young Black women in a Detroit homeless shelter contest stereotypes, critique their status as partial citizens and negotiate poverty, racism and gender violence to create and imagine lives for themselves.  
651 Arts  
515 Madison St, Bklyn  
718-304-1045 • 651arts.org

**SAT DEC 5**  
3–6pm • \$10-20 suggested  
**SKILL SHARE: FIGHT BACK AGAINST THE SURVEILLANCE STATE.** Is government surveillance getting you down? Us too. Join Jonathan S. Uss, director of Constitutional Communications, to learn how to keep your communications secure and get your online house in order. Bring laptop, new USB and snacks to share.  
Mayday Space  
176 St Nicholas Ave, Bklyn  
mayday.space.org

**SUN DEC 6**  
12–8 pm • Free  
**EVENT: HOLIDAY BOOK AND PRINT FAIR.** Tons of lefty books, posters and other printed materials will be for sale in one place. Participants include Haymarket Books, Interference Archive, Just Seeds, New York Review of Books and PM Press. If you would like to exhibit contact: info@marxedproject.org or revsgroup@gmail.com.  
The Brooklyn Commons  
388 Atlantic Ave  
marxedproject.org

**WED DEC 9**  
7pm • Free  
**EVENT: THE COST OF AN URBAN CLIMATE CRISIS, A #BHEARD COMMUNITY TOWN HALL.** Join local activists, journalists and the community at large to discuss the reality climate change has brought upon Brooklyn. Questions may be submitted prior to the event via social media at #BHEARD.  
BRIC Arts  
647 Fulton St  
718-683-5600 • bricartsmedia.org



TONYSKANSASCITY.COM

**CHURCH WAS NEVER THIS FUN:** Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping Choir will perform at Joe’s Pub every Sunday through December 20.

**ONE IS TOO MANY:** Events honoring the lives of the more than 20 trans\* and gender non-conforming people killed in the U.S. in the past year will be held November 20.



# CELEBRATING A MILESTONE

ON OCTOBER 15, THE INDYPENDENT BEGAN CELEBRATING ITS 15TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR AT THE HOME OF A LONGTIME SUPPORTER.



ADAMS TTEHS

ABBY SCHER, founding director of the Independent Press Association-New York, urges partygoers to give generously to the Indy.



Indypendent Managing Editor ALINA MOGILYANSKAYA and Executive Editor JOHN TARLETON.



OZIER MUHAMMAD



The Indy's CLAIRE ARKIN and MIKAEL TARKELA.

SHELL SHEDDY



SHELL SHEDDY

The Indy's NICHOLAS POWERS and DONALD PANETH share a laugh.



Brooklyn College journalism professor RONALD HOWELL.



OZIER MUHAMMAD

Author MICHAEL GOULD-WARTOFSKY.

OZIER MUHAMMAD

## HOSTING AN INDY HOUSE PARTY

BY NANCY ROMER



Our wonderful host, NANCY ROMER.

On October 15 we celebrated The Indypendent's 15th anniversary with a benefit house party at my place. Over 60 people came, ate, drank, talked like crazy and had fun. We all contributed money, some a little bit and some a lot, but all of us came away feeling proud to be in solidarity with this band of dedicated journalists who tell the truth and get it out in accessible ways.

The best part of hosting an Indy fundraising party is the joy of having your friends and friends of the Indy hang out in your house, chat up a storm and be a community of lefty activists. I love the buzz of intense conversation and laughter that ring out at an Indy house party. I love the fact that we are all pulling together to keep a great paper alive and well. I love the fact that we can do this together.

What does it take to host such a party? Clean up

the house. Go shopping. Cook and set up. Lots of busyness all for a good cause. Folks from the Indy will pitch in as needed. I'm used to hosting large parties at my house but smaller, more intimate gatherings of 15-25 people can be just as fun and meaningful and still give a nice boost to the Indy as well. Whatever you are comfortable with.

I'm not shy about asking my friends to support a good cause. It gives them a chance to get to know the people in the struggle, join a community of good people and do the right thing. Besides, we need to support our media because the rich folks won't. They are busy supporting the corporate media.

If you are thinking about how you can make a contribution to the Indy, here are some suggestions:

1. Make out a check and/or become a monthly sustainer at [indypendent.org/donate](http://indypendent.org/donate) — always a good idea.
2. Organize an Indy house party at your place or a friend's.

3. Gather friends from your neighborhood, college, organizations, workplace, etc. — any place where progressive thinkers and doers exist in your life.
4. Get your house ready for a feast and lots to drink — or use a caterer if you prefer.
5. Enjoy!

When it's over, lean back and know that your work is well-rewarded with the ongoing survival and thriving of a great newspaper.

Interested in hosting a house party on behalf of The Indypendent as we celebrate our 15th anniversary year? Email [john@indypendent.org](mailto:john@indypendent.org) or call 212-904-1282.



# ALL SYSTEMS GO AT MAYDAY

BY JOHN TARLETON

“We need a space.” In a city where rents are soaring and real estate is king, this is one of the most deeply felt laments of New York City activists looking to house their organizations, hold public events or just build a deeper sense of community.

For one group in Bushwick, their dream appears to be becoming true. In mid-September, after almost three years of dashed hopes, the Mayday community space moved into its new home at the Iglesia Santa Cruz church building at 176 Saint Nicholas Avenue near the DeKalb station on the L train line.

Mayday’s new home features a 700-square-foot art build room and a kitchen on the first floor, three classrooms on the second floor and a 2,700-square-foot “great hall” and kitchen on the third floor. On any given day or night the space can be found bustling with activities: a panel discussion by climate change activists, a build-out of large, colorful banners and props in support of living wage protesters, a meeting for local residents fighting gentrification and displacement, a training on how to secure your laptop from government spying, a Halloween costume party or a ceremony in honor of Indigenous People’s Resistance Day.

“We love this space and would love to stay for years to come,” said Lucas Shapiro, a member of the Mayday collective and one of two part-time paid staffers who helps oversee the space.

Drawing inspiration from the success of Spain’s “social centers,” the Mayday collective is looking to create a space that is a hub not only for social justice organizing but socializing and hanging out and creating the human relationships that build community. To help achieve that, they are also working to open a bar and event space in another building around the corner that is expected to open by next spring.

Many of Mayday’s key members have previous organizing experience with Occupy Wall Street or the global justice movement of the early 2000s and they say they are determined to learn from their experiences.

“It’s not Zuccotti Park. It’s not the open, ‘anybody do something’ model,” said Sandra Nurse, another collective member and Mayday’s other part-time staffer. “It’s about having a strategy to engage not just the people who show up but the people we would like to have get involved.”

To that end, Nurse said, Mayday has emphasized placing people who were born and raised in Bushwick and people of color in general on the group’s Planning Committee. It also holds regular volunteer orientations for neighborhood residents and hosts monthly community potlucks.

“We want this to be a place where people of color grassroots takes center stage and where people of color feel directly invested in the growth of the project,” said Nurse, who has lived in Bushwick since 2009 and is the founder of BK Rot, a composting service that provides employment opportunities for neighborhood youth.

The Mayday collective made its public debut late in the summer of 2014, when it briefly transformed another neighborhood space into an arts and activism hub in advance of the 400,000-strong People’s Climate March.

“It was amazing to me that so much was happening

in one place in my own back yard,” recalls Josh Carrea. He grew up in Bushwick and participated in the anti-displacement and housing justice contingent in the People’s Climate March, in what he describes as “my first introduction to social justice activism and organizing.”

Mayday fell off the public radar after the climate march while its members patiently worked to create internal structures and processes for building their organization. Carrea got involved during that time and continues to take on new responsibilities.

He currently helps with community outreach and wants to launch a neighborhood history project — “The People’s History of Bushwick” — that will invite longtime residents to tell their stories of how gentrification has remade the working-class immigrant neighborhood.

As a member of the programming committee, he plans to start a reading group that focuses on issues of gentrification and immigration that are of special concern to Bushwick residents. Another reading group he’s starting will be led by four women and look at the works of feminist science fiction writers like Octavia Butler.

“It will be something fun to read with important themes of resisting oppression,” Carrea said.

While Mayday’s organizers are busy getting their project off the ground, they sense they are on to something and have high hopes for what it could catalyze beyond the neighborhood they are planting roots in.

“We want to build a model that is replicable around New York City and around the country,” Shapiro said. “We want to see a movement culture that feels much more inviting and relevant to a much broader set of people.”

*Look for more coverage of New York City’s social movement spaces in the December issue. For a longer version of this article, see [independent.org](http://independent.org).*



ALL PHOTOS ERIK MCGREGOR

**SHARING IDEAS:** Participants in a November 5 event at Mayday Space discuss how climate change and social inequality combine to increase the devastating impact of natural disasters like Hurricane Sandy and Typhoon Haiyan.

**ENTERTAINING:** Mayday Space collective member McNair Scott serves a drink at a Halloween Party hosted at Mayday.

**COMMUNITY ORGANIZER:** Lilah Mejia from Good Old Lower East Side (GOLES) discusses the impact Hurricane Sandy had on her community.



# CHANGING THE FRAME

## MUSEUMS CHALLENGED TO SEVER TIES WITH CLIMATE DENIERS

BY CLAIRE ARKIN & JOHN TARLETON

In the past decade David Koch has poured vast sums of money into some of New York's most prominent cultural institutions — \$100 million to renovate and rename the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center, \$65 million for the David H. Koch Plaza in front of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and \$20 million for the David H. Koch Dinosaur Wing at the American Museum of Natural History.

Since 1997, Koch, who heads the oil and manufacturing conglomerate Koch Industries, has also provided at least \$79 million in funding to groups that deny climate change and thwart government policies that would address it, according to Greenpeace.

His largesse is a particularly striking example of the money poured into cultural and scientific institutions by the oil and gas industry.

In Europe, BP sponsors four major arts institutions in the United Kingdom — the National Portrait Gallery, the British Museum, the Royal Portrait Gallery and the Tate; the Italian oil giant Eni is a main corporate partner of the Louvre; and Shell was a sponsor of a climate change exhibition at the Science Museum in London.

This kind of financial support garners a lot of love from its beneficiaries. Daniel Brodsky, chair of the Met, has hailed Koch for “his vision and generosity.” Critics, meanwhile, say that this kind of giving is little more than “greenwashing” and have started a multi-national campaign to pressure scientific and cultural institutions to sever their financial ties to the fossil fuel industry.

“It’s strategic marketing, that’s why most [fossil fuel companies] line up for museum sponsorships — because it makes them look good in the public eye,” said Robert Janes, author of *Museums in a Troubled World* and editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Museum Management and Curatorship*.

In September, a coalition of groups that includes the Natural History Museum, Art Not Oil and BP or Not BP? launched a campaign urging arts and cultural institutions and individual cultural agents to sign a pledge refusing to promote fossil fuel interests in their artistic and business practices by divesting from fossil fuels, refusing fossil fuel sponsorship and kicking fossil fuel executives off their boards. The Fossil Funds Free pledge now has over 300 signers, including playwright Caryl Churchill, artist and composer Jem Finer and comedian Francesca Martinez.

Most of the groups that have signed the appeal so far are smaller, progressive institutions that were never likely to gain support from fossil fuel corporations. However, for campaign organizers, the early signers of the pledge provide a baseline from which to pursue larger, more prominent organizations to become signatories.

This initiative follows on the heels of an open letter published in March by the Natural History Museum calling on natural history and science museums to sever their ties to the fossil fuel industry. It was signed by more than 100 climate scientists and received widespread media attention.

“You shouldn’t have a science denier on the

board of a science museum. It’s a contradiction in terms,” James Powell, former president of the Los Angeles County Natural History Museum, told *Democracy Now!*.

The appeal to museums to steer clear of fossil fuel funding comes at a time when budget cuts to arts and science funding in the United States have left museums feeling more pressure to tap private sector funding streams. According to a report by the American Alliance of Museums, in 2012 more than 67 percent of museums felt economic stress, yet only 14 percent reported increases in government support, versus 35 percent who reported decreases in government support.

Nonetheless, says Powell, citing the debates about the South Africa divestment movement of the 1980s, “there is a right side and a wrong side, and if I were president at one of these institutions today, I would be arguing that my institution needed to get on the right side of this issue.”

While climate justice activists are busy trying to get fossil fuel companies out of museums, they are also developing innovative ways to bring their ideas into museums. Launched in September 2014, the mobile Natural History Museum is modeling what the role of a science museum can be when unbounded by corporate sponsorship and the strings that come attached with it.

Its exhibitions — an iconic polar bear roaming amid the detritus of industrial civilization, a feedback loop of clean water and water polluted by Koch Industries circulating between two tanks and a water fountain — highlight the sociopolitical forces that shape nature in a way rarely seen at a conventional museum.

The Natural History Museum’s co-founder and director Beka Economopoulos has made presentations in the past year at the annual conventions of the American Alliance of Museums and the Association of Science-Technology Centers. Now in the works is a new fossil fuel exhibition that will explain the fossil fuel ecosystem in the United States, which will debut in Houston in the spring.

With more museums in the United States than Starbucks and McDonalds combined, Economopoulos sees an opportunity to make a major cultural impact if museums break with the “authoritative neutrality” that she says has defined their aesthetic for generations.

“They see hundreds of thousands, even millions, of visitors a year, they’re key spaces for bridging science to the public and educating people,” Economopoulos said. “Imagine if this sector, these museums, became hubs for organizing and for communities feeling the brunt of the [climate] crisis to go and find solace and find solidarity.”

For more information, see [fossilfundsfree.org](http://fossilfundsfree.org).

**‘IT’S STRATEGIC MARKETING, THAT’S WHY MOST [FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES] LINE UP FOR MUSEUM SPONSORSHIPS — BECAUSE IT MAKES THEM LOOK GOOD IN THE PUBLIC EYE.’**

KEVIN WHIPPLE

November 2015 THE INDEPENDENT

# WOULD YOU LET THESE MEN CONTROL YOUR UTERUS?

BY AMY LITTLEFIELD

**E**arly on October 21, police in Claremont, New Hampshire, found a teenager with a hatchet inside a Planned Parenthood clinic. The teen had laid waste to the facility, smashing computers, medical equipment, phones and plumbing fixtures. Two weeks earlier, the same clinic — which provides basic care like birth control and HIV testing but not, actually, abortions — was spray-painted with the word “murderer.”

It was at least the fifth Planned Parenthood clinic to be attacked since mid-July, when the anti-choice Center for Medical Progress began releasing surreptitiously filmed videos showing Planned Parenthood officials discussing the donation of fetal tissue to medical researchers — a process that is entirely legal. The videos were deceptively edited to suggest Planned Parenthood was profiting from the donations, and the portions that were edited out showed the officials explicitly saying they do not. Beyond hatchet and arson attacks, the fallout from the videos has also included a spate of state and congressional investigations — none of which have uncovered any wrongdoing by Planned Parenthood, moves by multiple states to cut off Medicaid funding to the organization and surprise visits to Planned Parenthood offices in Texas by state officials, who demanded reams of patient records and employee information.

On the national stage, the public inquisition peaked in September, when a House committee spent five hours grilling Planned Parenthood Federation of America President Cecile Richards. That hearing lasted roughly twice as long as a Senate hearing a week later in which General John Campbell was questioned about the U.S. bombing of a Doctors Without Borders hospital in Afghanistan, a possible war crime. House Republicans have now formed a select committee to do to Planned Parenthood what they did to Hillary Clinton with Benghazi. Who can count the taxpayer dollars wasted by so-called conservatives?

Ironically, when it comes to public opinion, all of these attempts appear to have backfired. An NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll released in late September found that 47 percent of Americans had a positive view of Planned Parenthood. The organization was more popular than the Republican and Democratic parties, all the top presidential candidates and President Obama. Its approval rating had increased slightly since a previous survey in July.

For decades, the Hyde Amendment has banned federal

funding for abortion. Exceptions are made only in cases of rape, incest or life endangerment. So when Republicans talk about “defunding” Planned Parenthood, they’re talking about funding for family planning provided through Title X — a program signed into law by President Richard Nixon — and Medicaid funding for basic health care services for low-income people. It’s unlikely that Republicans will be able to cut off this funding while Obama is in office. But extremists in state legislatures across the country have provided a frightening picture of what the entire country could look like under a Republican president. What happens when you defund Planned Parenthood? Ask Texas.

In 2011, the Texas legislature implemented radical health care cuts in an effort to target Planned Parenthood, cutting funding for family planning by about two-thirds. The cuts forced 82 family planning clinics in Texas to close or discontinue family planning services. In 2012, researchers at the Texas Policy Evaluation Project (TxPEP) surveyed 318 pregnant women seeking abortions; nearly half reported they were unable to access the birth control they wanted in the three months before their pregnancy.

The situation has gotten worse since then. Despite a people’s filibuster and an 11-hour stand by Texas State Senator Wendy Davis, an omnibus anti-choice law passed in 2013. It gutted abortion access in Texas, causing the number of abortion clinics to drop from 41 to eight as courts lifted or permitted various provisions. Before a court reprieve, the restrictions periodically shuttered the only clinic in the Rio Grande Valley, Whole Woman’s Health in McAllen, putting an internal border checkpoint between undocumented pregnant people in the region and the nearest clinic.

As the Supreme Court decides whether to consider the constitutionality of the Texas law, the number of open abortion clinics in Texas stands at 18 and women are remaining pregnant longer than they want to be. TxPEP found that after the number of clinics in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area was cut in half, women have been waiting up to 20 days on average for an abortion. For many, that inevitably means they will pass beyond the threshold where abortion is possible and give birth to babies they don’t want.

Texas is not the only state where abortion access is under siege. Since 2010, states across the country have enacted nearly 300 restrictions on abortion. These restrictions, which have shuttered clinics and forced people to remain pregnant longer than they want to be, amount to

state violence, no less destructive than the hatchet-wielding teenager in New Hampshire. Even though not all of it is making national headlines, resistance to this violence is growing.

On an August day in Virginia, breast cancer patient Leigh Anne Woods stood up at a news conference to defend Planned Parenthood. She removed her shirt. At the podium, Roanoke County Supervisor Al Bedrosian was railing against the local United Way for giving money to Planned Parenthood. That money that is used to fund sex education, not abortion. Woods faced him, displaying her double mastectomy scars.

“You have a problem because they perform abortions,” Woods said, according to local news station WDBJ7. “Look at everything else they do, they save lives!”

“This was about education funding,” Woods later wrote on Facebook. “I took my shirt off, stepped towards him and stood as an example of what education does. Early detection.”

Woods emphasized that her protest was about education, but her actions laid bare what’s really at stake: survival. The stakes are particularly high for low-income people who rely on Planned Parenthood’s affordable health care services.

Since being put on public trial, Planned Parenthood has emphasized that abortion constitutes only 3 percent of its health services. But in the end, that doesn’t matter. The people who want to end legal abortion don’t care how many cancer screenings Planned Parenthood provides. To them, embryos and fetuses are people, and that means the people whose bodies they grow in can never be fully human. So while Planned Parenthood is defending itself, the pro-choice movement has gone beyond defending Planned Parenthood; it is unapologetically defending abortion.

Organizations like the Sea Change Program and Shift, founded by Whole Woman’s Health CEO and founder Amy Hagstrom Miller, have focused on ending the shame and stigma around abortion. In September, the hashtag #ShoutYourAbortion caught fire, with thousands of people shedding the stigma and telling their abortion stories without apology. While the experiences shared on #ShoutYourAbortion were as varied as the people who shared them, the overarching message was loud and clear: Abortion saves and improves lives. That’s a beautiful thing.



LYNNE FOSTER



SOME PLACES YOU CAN FIND

THE INDYPENDENT

BELOW 14TH ST

SEWARD PARK LIBRARY  
192 EAST BROADWAY

LES PEOPLE’S FEDERAL  
CREDIT UNION  
39 AVENUE B

ST. MARKS BOOKS  
136 E. 3RD ST.

KEY FOOD  
52 AVENUE A

BLUESTOCKINGS  
172 ALLEN ST.

THEATER 80 ST. MARK’S  
80 ST. MARK’S PL.

THEATER FOR THE NEW CITY  
155 FIRST AVE.

MAMOUN’S FALAFEL  
RESTAURANT  
22 ST. MARK’S PL.

MCNALLY JACKSON BOOKS  
52 PRINCE ST.

THINK COFFEE  
248 MERCER ST.

FILM FORUM  
209 W. HOUSTON ST.

HUDSON PARK LIBRARY  
66 LEROY ST.

CINEMA VILLAGE  
22 E. 12TH ST.

LGBT CENTER  
208 W. 13TH ST.

14TH TO 96TH ST

EPIPHANY LIBRARY  
228 E. 23RD ST.

MUHLENBERG LIBRARY  
209 W. 23RD ST.

GRISTEDES  
307 W. 26TH ST.

TACO BANDITO  
325 8TH AVE.

COLUMBUS LIBRARY  
942 TENTH AVE.

VENEZUELAN CONSULATE  
7 E. 51ST ST.

MANHATTAN  
NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK  
537 W. 59TH ST.

SHAKESPEARE BOOKS  
969 LEXINGTON AVE.

YORKVILLE BRANCH  
LIBRARY  
222 E 79TH ST.

ST. AGNES LIBRARY  
444 AMSTERDAM AVE.

96TH ST. LIBRARY  
112 E. 96TH ST.

ABOVE 96TH ST.

EAST HARLEM CAFE  
104TH ST & LEXINGTON AVE.

SAVOY BAKERY  
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BROADWAY AND 114TH ST.

115TH ST. LIBRARY  
203 W. 115TH

HARLEM LIBRARY  
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104 E 126TH ST.

MAYSLES CINEMA  
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LIBRARY  
503 W. 145TH ST.

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W. 156TH ST. & AMSTERDAM

FORT WASHINGTON  
LIBRARY  
535 W. 179TH ST.

BROOKLYN

BROOKLYN BOROUGH HALL  
209 JORALEMON ST.

BROOKLYN MUSEUM  
200 EASTERN PKWY.

BROOKLYN LIBRARY  
1044 EASTERN PKWY.

BROOKLYN COMMONS  
388 ATLANTIC AVE.

BROOKLYN HEIGHTS  
LIBRARY  
280 CADMAN PLAZA WEST

CARROLL GARDENS LIBRARY  
396 CLINTON ST. @ UNION

COUSIN JOHN’S PIZZA  
70 7TH AVE.

KEY FOODS  
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—Chelsea E. Manning (Guardian Op-Ed, 27 May 2015)

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STOP ARMS SHIPMENTS AND FINANCING OF ISIS BY OUR OWN ALLIES! — America’s allies, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar allow wealthy donors inside their borders to funnel huge sums of money and arms to ISIS and other terrorist groups. ISIS also raises millions of dollars by selling oil drilled on its captured lands on the black market in Turkey, which refuses to stop the sales. The U.S. must insist its allies end this support for ISIS.

SAY NO TO A “NO FLY ZONE” — Such a zone would require substantial U.S. ground troops and cost \$1 billion a month, according to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

SUPPORT NEGOTIATIONS — Strongly support talks among the U.S., Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, the Assad government and other interested parties. Negotiate without preconditions. The horrible Syrian civil war can only be solved by political negotiations, not military force.

AID SYRIAN REFUGEES — Significantly increase the number of Syrian refugees allowed to enter our country and fully fund UN programs that aid the millions of Syrian refugees. During the past 4 years, the U.S. has admitted only 1,500 refugees compared to Germany’s agreement to accept 800,000.

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BOOK TALK: CONFESSIONAL WRITING WHILE TRANS: AN EVENING WITH JULIET JACQUES, AUTHOR OF *TRANS: A MEMOIR*. Juliet Jacques's memoir *Trans*, just out this autumn from Verso, tells of her life to the present moment: a story of growing up, of defining yourself and of the rapidly changing world of gender politics.

**SUN NOV 22 • 7PM • \$5 SUGGESTED**  
ZINE LAUNCH: HOAX ZINE #11: FEMINISMS AND STRATEGY KARAOKE RELEASE PARTY. Hoax is a bi-annual queer feminist compilation zine that aims to create a space to share our own truths. This event will celebrate six and a half years of collaboration and the release of our eleventh issue on the theme of feminist strategy.

**THU NOV 19 • 7PM • \$5 SUGGESTED**  
STRATEGY: DISCUSSING ARTISTS' RESPONSES TO GENTRIFICATION. With Caroline Woolard of the NYC Real Estate Investment Cooperative and Erick Lyle of Streetopia and Scam Magazine.

HISTORY STATES

## ECONOMICS

# NO LONGER A DIRTY WORD

BY MICHAEL STEVEN SMITH

The word socialism is in the air these days. It gets the most hits on the Merriam Webster Dictionary website. Bernie Sanders, even though he is running for the Democratic Party nomination, calls himself a socialist. Over in England, socialist Jeremy Corbyn was recently elected the head of the British Labor Party.

Corbyn's election was a consequence of a social movement that saw thousands of young people join his organization. Likewise, in the United States, an estimated 200,000 people have volunteered to work for Sanders. The success of Sanders and Corbyn is reflective of the beginnings of broad anti-capitalist social movements here and abroad, especially in Greece and Spain. Why?

Six people in the Walton family (of Walmart) are worth as much as the bottom 40 percent of the U.S. population, while only some 400 families donate most of the money spent in election campaigns. It has led Jimmy Carter to reflect, at age 90, that “We’ve become an oligarchy instead of a democracy.” Since the 2010 Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*, corporations are considered people with respect to the amount of money they can donate in an election. I will consider a corporation a person the day it gets a colonoscopy.

Millions listened with sympathy to what Pope Francis said in his speech to Congress on inequality, poverty, nuclear disarmament and the global arms trade. His encyclical on climate change clearly takes on the capitalist economic system. People understand that it works for the 1% but has been a disaster for the rest of us. In a Pew poll three years ago, 49 percent of young people under the age of 30 responded that they had a favorable reaction to the word socialism.

I recently co-edited a book of 31 original essays called *Imagine: Living In a Socialist USA*. Before he agreed to publish it, the executive at HarperCollins asked me what my definition of socialism was. I responded, “It is economic as well as political democracy.” He smiled and offered a contract.

Our book shows how almost everything would be different in socialist America: housing, medicine, food, education, sexuality, welfare, art, women's rights, law, media, immigration, racism and ecological preservation. This is so because, as Albert Einstein wrote, socialism is humanity's attempt “to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development.”

## SEATTLE VOTES SOCIALIST, AGAIN

To chants of “Four more years!” from her supporters, Seattle's socialist city councilmember Kshama Sawant (right) was re-elected to a second term on November 3. Sawant received 54 percent of the vote to 46 percent for Seattle Urban League President and CEO Pamela Banks, who ran as a close ally of the business community.

“There has never, ever been a better time to become a socialist,” Sawant said. “We have shown how working people can stand up to the billionaire class and its establishment.”

Sawant won an upset victory in 2013 after vowing to bring a \$15 minimum wage to Seattle. Her re-election bid,

which mobilized more than 600 volunteers, was boosted by her success in pressuring other city councilmembers to adopt the \$15 minimum wage, making Seattle the first major city to adopt such a measure. Los Angeles and San Francisco have since followed suit.

Sawant ran on an ambitious working-class agenda again this year: a rent control law to reign in Seattle's soaring housing costs, a millionaire's tax to pay for improvements to the city's mass transit system and municipal broadband as an alternative to the high-priced services provided by near-monopoly providers.

“We're fed up of living in a society that continually rewards the people at the very top,” Sawant told *The Guardian*, “while the rest of us languish in various states of poverty in the richest country in the history of humanity.”

— INDYPENDENT STAFF



GARY MARTIN

Our most renowned moral figure and democratic socialist Martin Luther King Jr. noted in a posthumously published essay titled “A Testament of Hope” that “the real issue to be faced” is “the radical reconstruction of society itself.”

Racism is impossible to eliminate under capitalism because it is used by the system to divide and conquer. Race gives class its intensity. Young activists for Black Lives Matter, immigrant rights, prison abolition, a living wage and climate justice are opening people's eyes to state violence and the profound impact of racism in our country.

For far too long, socialism has been branded a system of state control. As such, it has not been able to gain a foothold.

In our book historian Paul LeBlanc argues persuasively for a third American Revolution mounted by “a broad left-wing coalition” that could spark a mass socialist movement. Socialism, he writes, “involves people taking control of their own lives, shaping their own futures, together controlling resources that make such freedom possible. ... Socialism will come to nothing if it is not a movement of the great majority in the interests of the great majority. ... People become truly free through their own efforts.”

Socialists have quite a record as participants and leaders in the great reforms of our society. This includes defending civil liberties and starting the American Civil Liberties Union; struggling to end racism, by helping to start the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, participating in the anti-slavery movement before and during the Civil War and now, supporting Black Lives Matter; fighting for women's rights, including the vote and reproductive justice; and championing public education and the end of child labor. Socialists helped form the Congress of Industrial Organizations and win the eight-hour workday, the weekend, Social Security, worker's compensation and unemployment insurance. They were leaders in the opposition to nuclear arms and the wars in Vietnam and Iraq. They are for LGBT rights, immigrant rights, prisoners' rights and universal health care. And on the question of all questions, they side with Pope Francis in understanding that without the abolition of the capitalist economic system of production the destruction of the planet is insured.

As socialist John Lennon sang: “You may say I'm a dreamer / But I'm not the only one / I hope someday you'll join us / And the world will live as one.”

Michael Steven Smith is a New York City attorney, author and editor. He is the co-host of the radio program *Law and Disorder*, which airs on WBAI-99.5 FM Mondays 9–10am.



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# SEEKING REFUGE

## FLEEING WAR, SYRIAN REFUGEES TREK ACROSS A WARY CONTINENT

BY SHAWN CARRIÉ

LESBOS, Greece — At dawn, the well-metered rhythm of the boats’ arrival brings a teeming chaos to the lustrous, white sand beaches of Lesbos’s northern coast, only seven miles from Turkey. One after another, teetering rafts ease onto land and hundreds of people disembark, bending down to kiss the ground in gratitude for their safe arrival. They stretch their legs, check their belongings, then quickly bustle away on foot. Where, they do not know — they just do what everyone else is doing: walk.

On the other side of the island, the magnitude of what is happening is evident. The summer before last, Lesbos was one of the higher-end vacation resorts of the Greek islands. Now, it is the port of Europe: 4,000 people camp in the shipyard, biding time and waiting to move forward. Tents line the shore and spill over onto the streets in front of hotels, cafés and boutiques. Between 2,000 and 6,000 refugees arrive on this island in boats every day. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), over 218,000 people crossed the Mediterranean to seek asylum in Europe in October 2015 — the highest monthly total ever recorded.

For the asylum seekers, Mytilini, the capital of Lesbos, is the first step in a long journey. Its port is a crowded 24-hour bazaar, part encampment, part maze of lines. There are lines to buy tickets, lines for the camp doctor, lines for a tiny hose that serves as the only source of water, lines to be checked and board the departing ferry. It takes at least three days to get a ticket to leave the island, and each costs 60 euros (\$65). Everyone has to pay.

### ‘CAN WE GO TOGETHER?’

It was here that I met Mahmoud. He was sitting on the rocks along the shoreline, staring out at the sea. He had arrived in Lesbos earlier that day with no money, no passport, no shoes and no family. The flimsy vessel that carried him from Turkey had capsized, throwing everything to the waves. He swam in the darkness for “maybe minutes, maybe hours. I don’t know,” Mahmoud said. “I felt I was going insane. Thank God, I reached the rocks and climbed to land.”

All his possessions were gone, save for his Syrian ID card and a picture of his brother that he had safeguarded in plastic wrap. Of the 40 or so people who got in the boat with him, he saw only four others when he arrived on the beach in the middle of the night.

Mahmoud asked, shyly, if he could follow me: “*Nizhab anuyak?*” — “Can we go together? Me and you?” Here I was, a reporter just getting my bearings in the flow of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere making their way north from the Greek islands to the promise of a better life in Germany. And he was asking me for directions. His innocent smile won me over, only faintly hinting at the ordeal he had endured. I knew we would become fast friends.

For Mahmoud, the war had seemed distant from the backcountry village outside Hama where he grew up. The younger of two sons, he had stayed at home to work the land and take care of his aging parents, and never learned to properly read or write in Arabic. His life was relatively undisturbed, until everything unraveled.

This summer he turned 22 and was summoned to serve in the Syrian army. “When you are called, there is no chance to say no,” Mahmoud told me. Military service is compulsory for all men, save for those who are only sons.

Just weeks after his deployment to a base in Qamishli, near the Turkish border, Mahmoud received a call from his mother: His older brother had been one of 10 young men beheaded by extremists in the public square.

The army gave him leave to attend the funeral. That night, Mahmoud said he couldn’t even look at the uniform he’d been given. “I didn’t want to fight. I don’t want to die,” Mahmoud said. He took his brother’s passport and crossed the border to Turkey.

People’s stories, their reasons for fleeing and their willingness to talk about

it are as varied as their personalities. Some speak with vociferous detail about their journeys by boat, over mountains or under razor-wire fences. Others are more cautious. One young man, for example, seemed eager to talk about his past, but when I pulled out my recorder, his eyes darted away. “Please, no, this is just for you. Bashar hears everything,” he said, nervously invoking the name of the Syrian ruler, Bashar al-Assad.

Sawar, a 19-year-old from Damascus, had a bubbly demeanor among her travel companions. They could easily have been taken for a group of college kids on a spring break road trip. But she refused to talk about Syria. “All you need to know is that I have memories that are inerascable.” Her friends took special care of her and seemed like the only family she had left. It could’ve well been the truth.

As for Mahmoud, his only thought is of his family. His desertion has put his mother and father in danger. Their only option is to flee, but legal routes are impossible and they have no money to pay a smuggler to take them across the border. The urgency he feels is palpable, as if time is running out. “Work! I want to work! Only work! I’ll do any job,” he would say.

I offered to buy his ferry ticket so that we could continue traveling together, but Mahmoud flatly refused to take a hand-out. Instead, I went to the market and bought a camping gas burner, a copper pot, coffee, tea, sugar and cups.

In three days, Mahmoud earned almost 150 euros preparing smalls cups of coffee and tea in the camp. He bought his ticket for the ferry to Athens and pressed 18 euros into my pocket as repayment for his startup capital. Before departing Lesbos, he insisted we take a photo together in front of the ferry, but only after he’d bought a fresh change of clothes.

Burdened by horrific memories, some travelers still find moments of happiness and levity during their journey. A group of children swims playfully in a calm inlet of the beach, unperturbed by the sea that had almost swallowed them up just days earlier. Watching them, a bystander explains to me: “Do you see why these people do what they do? They swim because it’s like therapy — they’re no longer swimming for their lives.”

### LANDING ON EUROPE’S DOORSTEP

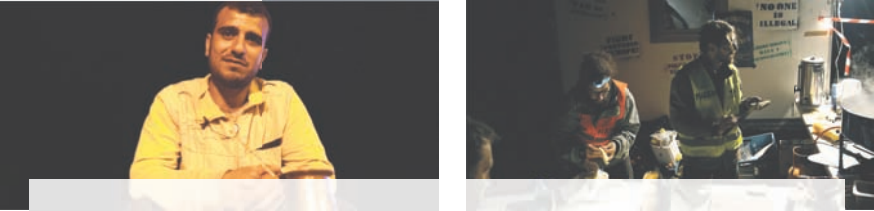
The current crisis that has suddenly garnered worldwide attention is by no means a new phenomenon. The war in Syria has steadily devolved over the course of over four years, killing a quarter-million people and displacing half of the country’s population of 23 million. Instability in Afghanistan and Iraq has been producing refugees since the U.S. invasions of 2001 and 2003. What’s changed is that the repercussions have now landed on Europe’s doorstep and become visible to the Western world.

For years, asylum seekers traveled clandestinely, procuring the services of smugglers who would arrange their travel through illegal means. Sheer numbers have now brought the business out into the open: border crossings now process the registrations of hundreds or even thousands of people per day as buses line up to shuttle them between checkpoints.

After a 12-hour ferry ride from Lesbos, Athens is a bazaar of options and paths onward. Clusters of people huddle around maps in Omonia Square, parsing rumors and the latest information as they charge their cell phones in the crowded cafés. An uninterrupted trip from Athens to Berlin would normally take no more than one full day by car or train. But for refugees, who must navigate a completely alternate path, it takes at least a week in most cases.

Mahmoud and I buy bus tickets from a shiftly Greek man who leads us to a remote neighborhood of the city. Buses are loading up to the brim with passengers and departing at night. We reach the town of Idomeni at the Greek-Macedonian border just as the sun is coming up, and file as a group into one of several long tents. Each one holds hundreds of people waiting for their group to be called.

In and of themselves, borders are invisible. What we see are only fences and signs. Crossing them is a surprisingly simple procedure: A group leader,



**LONG, HARD JOURNEY:** Refugees board a Slovenia-bound train in Tovarnik, Croatia.

**ON THE MOVE:** Mahmoud walking through a field across the border at Gevgelija, Macedonia. He fled Syria after being drafted into the army and then survived a harrowing journey across the Aegean Sea.

**CATCHING HER BREATH:** A woman and her children await registration documents from the Greek authorities at a camp in Lesbos.

**TEA, ANYONE?** Mahmoud sells coffee and tea in Lesbos, Greece, to earn money for his ferry passage to the Greek mainland.

**NO BORDERS:** Volunteers of the “Czech Team” at the Serbo-Croatian border work through the night, after staff of other NGOs return to their hotels.

himself a refugee, collects the Greek registration papers and assigns a group number. When it’s called, 50 people at a time are led through a gate to a road. The group leader hands the stack of papers to an officer, who quickly flips through the wrinkled documents. Then he waves his hand, and the group walks.

### SEPARATED

Twenty minutes later, Mahmoud and I arrive at a train station patrolled by Macedonian soldiers. “Two lines! Syrian, there! Other, there!” Bleary-eyed and sweating as we shuffle toward the train, we see that the last wagon appears to be nearly full. The crowd grows agitated.

“Documents, please.” I show my U.S. passport. Bad move. The soldier informs me that this train is for refugees only — as an American, I cannot board it. There is no time to negotiate. I tell Mahmoud, thoroughly confused, not to worry, that I’ll meet him on the other side of Macedonia in Kosovo. But when I arrive there, I can’t find him. Disheartened, I have little choice but to continue.

Further along, in the Serbian capital of Belgrade, the central bus and rail station is patrolled by submachine gun-wielding police officers. They shoo away any disheveled or tired-looking groups of people sitting on the ground with blankets and suitcases — usually refugees, but occasionally, a homeless Serbian.

Abdul Ramadan, an Egyptian Serb, mans an information kiosk in a tent-filled city park in Belgrade where refugees congregate and camp as they await buses to Croatia. He spends his days rushing about, trying to provide reliable advice on navigating the labyrinth of semi-underground transportation and talking down prices with bus drivers looking to profit off the surplus of confused customers. “A lot of these drivers are trying to cheat the people,” Abdul explained to me. “So I have to work with them to make sure people get the right information and pay the agreed price to get to the border.”

At the Croatian border town of Bapska, there is little more than a dirt path lined with 30-foot-wide tents and surrounded by cornfields on both sides. It is said to be littered with mines left over from the Serbo-Croatian War of the 1990s. The usual NGOs are present, but it’s clear that a different group is in charge here. A self-organized network of volunteers called the “Czech Team” manages the operation with meticulous precision. In one tent, two women with headlamps sort clothes by gender and shoes by size; next door, a man sporting a mohawk, latex gloves and a surgeon’s mask is diligently focused on an assembly line of peanut butter sandwiches. Above a detailed cardboard mosaic of schedules and task lists are spray-painted stencils declaring the group’s credo: “NO ONE IS ILLEGAL — FIGHT FORTRESS EUROPE.”

Coming from all over Europe, many of the volunteers have left their jobs or studies to devote their time here. Eschewing bureaucracy, they have no funding or titles and make decisions by consensus. They are known throughout the Balkans as the most effective aid group in the region.

### ‘WHY DO WE EVEN CALL THEM “REFUGEES”?’

I manage to hitch a ride with a group of volunteers making a supply delivery. Nerissa Hadzic, a reporter for a Croatian radio station, is on the phone placating an editor who seems upset that she hasn’t turned in any material. “I’ll give you something good soon — you know, immersive.”

Satisfied she’s bought herself more time, she brushes off the call and resumes drafting a trilingual Facebook post calling for donations.

“This is where I belong. These are my people. I feel the same as a refugee,” Hadzic says, without irony. When she was a child, her parents brought her from Bosnia to Croatia to escape the Serbian army’s bombardment of Sarajevo.

I get the sense from those who feel called to help that they, too, are seeking something to connect with. “Why do we even call them ‘refugees’? These people are running away from hell. It’s no different from what anyone else would do,” Hadzic reflects as we’re driving through the eastern Croatian countryside. “They are searching for safety. They are us and we are them. Everybody is searching for something.”

Arriving in Germany or Belgium or Sweden only marks the beginning of a new chapter. Asylum applications, language classes and cultural integration will be discussed and debated by politicians and the media for the next 20 years.

What we are seeing is an entirely new generation of immigrants. This year alone has brought over 750,000 asylees to Europe, mostly from Syria and Afghanistan. Many of them will someday gain citizenship. Their children will grow up speaking another language, forming friendships and making ties to their new home. Some will return to their homelands, as many say they would like to, whenever the wars end. But hope is scarce that it will be soon.

I heard from one of the Syrian contacts Mahmoud saved in my phone that he had made it to Germany and was staying in the northern port city of Hamburg. I find him in an old tennis gymnasium converted into a reception center for asylum seekers.

Mahmoud is thrilled to see me, beaming as he tells me about the new friends he’s made among the families who he shares the communal space with, and even a few Germans. He’s grateful to finally stay in one place and have a bed to sleep in at night. “God is great, I have a pillow to lay my head on!”

Another Syrian who settled in Hamburg two years ago has taken Mahmoud under his wing and is showing him the ropes of German life. He gave Mahmoud an iPhone, which he uses to send photos to family and friends in Syria, posing proudly, to show them that he is comfortable in his new home. He doesn’t want them to worry, but though he has reached his destination, Mahmoud is still preoccupied with his family. It will be at least six months until he gets a permit to work legally, and he is anxious that the clock is ticking.

“Work! Work! I need to find work,” Mahmoud repeats. “I am not important, all I want is my family safe.”

In a few weeks, he will be transferred to more permanent group housing in another town in rural Germany. He will start taking classes in German language and culture, and begin the long process of integrating into a very foreign reality. Until then, he doesn’t know what to do, other than what everyone else is doing: wait.

ALL PHOTOS SHAWN CARRIÉ



# IMMIGRANT VOICES

## AFTER THE ARRIVAL, MORE CHALLENGES

BY ELIA GRAN

For refugees arriving in Europe, surviving their journey from war-torn regions of the Middle East and Africa is only the first step. What follows, *The Independent* learned from speaking with refugees and their allies, is a long and difficult experience in which the strongest support often comes from networks of other refugees.

### KHALED: A Mechanic Reassembles His Life

I've lived in Spain for a year and a half now. I am 24 years old. I'm originally from Damascus, Syria, where I worked as a mechanic. I left when the revolution in Syria began in 2011 and the government started recruiting young boys to turn them into soldiers, to kill people. My uncle, who has been living in Spain for five years, took me in. I came by plane. First to Beirut and then to Madrid. I was in Lebanon for three months waiting for my papers; that's where I encountered racism. I would talk to people and when I told them I was from Syria some would say, "That's disgusting."

My parents stayed in Syria. My little brother, who is 20 years old, went to Germany; he also fled so he wouldn't be recruited by the Syrian army. His journey to Germany started overseas. First he got to Turkey, then took a boat to Greece and then traveled to the other countries. It took him almost a month to get to Germany. Before, a lot of people came to Europe by plane, but now it's not as easy.

He went to a refugee camp in Germany with an NGO and there they helped him with his paperwork. I was in contact with him while he traveled. My sister remains in Syria and she wants to come to Europe with her husband. I think that taking the boat is one of the only solutions for getting out of Syria.

My mother won't leave Syria. "I have been here for so many years, what am I going to do out of here?" she says. But life in Syria is very dangerous. There are soldiers and tanks on the street and you can't leave your house, you can't do anything. What scares me the most is that my family is still in Syria and that every ten minutes things can change.

In Spain it's harder for the refugees than in Germany. I'm going to stay in Spain because my papers are here and the language is easy, but there is almost no economic assistance. People are nice but life is hard due to Spain's economic crisis. In Germany the government helps you get a house. My brother is currently living in a flat and every month he gets about 400 euros.

For a while I was working in a company that made potato chips. It was a very hard job. Sometimes we worked at night and other times during the day. With that job I couldn't rest, I couldn't do anything. What I really want to do is continue my studies as a mechanic. I really like that job.

When I first got to Madrid I turned to the Asociación de Apoyo al Pueblo Sirio (Syrian People Support Association). They have helped me a lot with my papers and other issues. There are a lot of people in Madrid who don't understand or know about the problem in Syria.

Now I help with the refugees who arrive from Syria, which are quite a few. I write down their name, number, where they came from and who they are traveling with. A lot of people come alone and most of them continue to travel to other countries.

I think that the war in Syria will last more than 10 years. I want to go back but I don't know when I will be able to.

### DANIELA: 'You Become Politicized and Empowered'

I am part of the organization called El Espacio del Inmigrante. It opened three years ago when the Spanish government

changed the law in regards to the health care system. We realized then that immigrants were literally getting kicked out of the system.

I am originally from Peru. My boyfriend is Palestinian and Jordanian and he fled Jordan two years ago. We realized that he was potentially eligible for political asylum, so he started working with the CEAR (Spanish Refugee Aid Commission).

Now he is living in an anarchist house in Vienna. Housemates drive to Croatia to help bring refugees from Syria, Eritrea, Iraq and other places to the house. When I was there, a group of refugees had just arrived. They were really scared because they didn't speak any English. The first contact they had was with our Austrian friends and they thought they were policemen.

On one occasion there was a young Syrian boy in the hospital in Vienna who was dying from cancer. Nobody spoke Arabic and so he couldn't speak to anyone. He was trying to get into Germany because he had some family there, but no family members could come see him. My boyfriend, who spoke Arabic, stayed with him until he died. He was with him for 10 days, talking to him and making sure that a ceremony was carried out for his death. To repatriate the body, the Palestinian community pitched in to cover the total expenses, which were 8,000 euros.

In the anarchist community in Vienna there is a lot of solidarity that has been going on for many years. The economic situation is better than in other European countries. People can receive refugees in their house because they have more space to organize this type of situation. Many times what the refugees need is not so much food or clothes but being able to be with other people who are in their same situation, help finding a lawyer that will work pro bono or help finding a bus station in case they want to go elsewhere. The refugee-migrant network is huge. Usually, the refugees are the first ones to aid other refugees.

Now in Vienna there are a lot of refugees arriving to a train station that is two blocks from the house where my boyfriend is living. Sometimes he is scared to go in there because there may be military or police officers. If he had a Syrian passport, the story would be different, because Syrians, Eritreans and Iraqis are not being deported at the moment.

At the beginning when "they" start to create your identity as an immigrant or refugee you reject it and say, "No, I'm a human being." After, there is a moment when you embrace your identity as an immigrant and say, "Screw you. Yes, I'm an immigrant and I'm here and I have every right to live here." Once you are conscious of how the system works you become politicized and empowered. You understand. This gives you a tool to not go crazy, because psychologically, applying for a nationality destroys you, just by the way you're questioned.

Initially when the European Union established the framework that people weren't migrants but refugees, I thought this distinction was okay. It was awful to hear how later citizens were repeating, "No, these are migrants, and those are refugees. These are the ones we don't help." A month later you could hear: "If we don't deport illegal immigrants, we can't receive these refugees of different nationalities." So it turned out to be the perfect game they needed to make a big scandal in the media. They needed people to become immersed in the refugee situation and identify refugees as Syrians and reinforce the deportation system.

### SEEKING A HOME

Daniela does solidarity work with other European immigrants.

Khaled worked as a mechanic in Damascus, Syria.



# WAR, REFUGEES & REGIME CHANGE

BY ROBERT PARRY

**T**he refugee chaos that is now pushing deep into Europe — dramatized by gut-wrenching photos of Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi, whose body washed up on a beach in Turkey — started with the cavalier ambitions of American neoconservatives and their liberal-interventionist sidekicks who planned to remake the Middle East and other parts of the world through “regime change.”

Instead of the promised wonders of “democracy promotion” and “human rights,” what these “anti-realists” have accomplished is to spread death, destruction and destabilization across the Middle East and parts of Africa and now into Ukraine and the heart of Europe. Yet, since these neocon forces still control the official narrative, their explanations get top billing — such as that there hasn’t been enough “regime change.”

For instance, the *Washington Post*’s neocon editorial page editor Fred Hiatt has blamed “realists” for the cascading catastrophes. Hiatt castigated them and President Barack Obama for not intervening more aggressively in Syria to depose President Bashar al-Assad, a longtime neocon target for “regime change.”

But the truth is that this accelerating spread of human suffering can be traced back directly to the unchecked influence of the neocons and their liberal fellow-travelers who have resisted political compromise and, in the case of Syria, blocked any realistic efforts to work out a power-sharing agreement between Assad and his political opponents, those who are not terrorists.

Any suggestion that the only realistic option in Syria is a power-sharing compromise that would include Assad — who is viewed as the protector of Syria’s Christian, Shiite and Alawite minorities — is rejected out of hand with the slogan, “Assad must go!”

The neocons have created a conventional wisdom that holds the Syrian crisis would have been prevented if only Obama had followed the neocons’ 2011 prescription of another U.S. intervention to force another “regime change.” Yet, the far more likely outcome would have been either another indefinite and bloody U.S. military occupation or the black flag of Islamic terrorism flying over Damascus.

## GET PUTIN

Another villain who emerged from the 2013 failure to bomb Syria was Russian President Vladimir Putin, who infuriated the neocons by his work

with Obama on Syria’s surrender of its chemical weapons and who further annoyed the neocons by helping to get the Iranians to negotiate seriously on constraining their nuclear program. Despite the “regime change” disasters in Iraq and Libya, the neocons wanted to wave the “regime change” wand again over Syria and Iran.

Putin got his comeuppance when U.S. neocons, including National Endowment for Democracy President Carl Gershman and Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Victoria Nuland helped orchestrate a “regime change” in Ukraine on February 22, 2014, overthrowing elected President Viktor Yanukovich and putting in a fiercely anti-Russian regime on Russia’s border.

As thrilled as the neocons were with their “victory” in Kiev and their success in demonizing Putin in the mainstream U.S. news media, Ukraine followed the now-predictable post-regime-change descent into a vicious civil war. Western Ukrainians waged a brutal “anti-terrorist operation” against ethnic Russians in the east who resisted the U.S.-backed coup.

Thousands of Ukrainians died and millions were displaced as Ukraine’s national economy teetered toward collapse. Yet the neocons and their liberal-hawk friends again showed their propaganda skills by pinning the blame for everything on “Russian aggression” and Putin.

Though Obama was apparently caught off-guard by the Ukrainian “regime change,” he soon joined in denouncing Putin and Russia. The European Union also got behind U.S.-demanded sanctions against Russia despite the harm those sanctions also inflicted on Europe’s already shaky economy. Europe’s stability is now under additional strain because of the flows of refugees from the war zones of the Middle East.

## A DOZEN YEARS OF CHAOS

So, we can now look at the consequences and costs of the past dozen years under the spell of neocon/liberal-hawk “regime change” strategies. According to many estimates, the death toll in Iraq, Syria and Libya has exceeded one million, with several million more refugees flooding into — and stretching the resources of — fragile Middle East countries.

Hundreds of thousands other refugees and migrants have fled to Europe, putting major strains on the continent’s social structures, which were already stressed by the severe recession that followed the 2008 Wall Street crash. Even without the refugee crisis, Greece and other southern European countries would be struggling to meet their citizens’ needs.

Stepping back for a moment and assessing the full impact of neoconservative policies, you might be amazed at how widely they have spread chaos across a large swath of the globe. Who would have thought that the neocons would have succeeded in destabilizing not only the Mideast but Europe as well?

And, as Europe struggles, the export markets of China are squeezed, spreading economic instability to that crucial economy and, with its market shocks, the reverberations are rumbling back to the United States too.

We now see the human tragedies of neocon/liberal-hawk ideologies captured in the suffering of the Syrians and other refugees flooding Europe and the death of children drowning as their desperate families flee the chaos created by “regime change.” But will the neocon/liberal-hawk grip on Washington finally be broken? Will a debate even be allowed about the dangers of “regime change” prescriptions in the future?

Not if the likes of the *Washington Post*’s Fred Hiatt have anything to say about it. The truth is that Hiatt and other neocons retain their dominance of the mainstream U.S. news media, so all that one can expect from the various mainstream outlets is more neocon propaganda, blaming the chaos not on their policy of “regime change” but on the failure to undertake even more “regime change.”

The one hope is that many Americans will not be fooled this time and that a belated “realism” will finally return to U.S. geopolitical strategies that will look for obtainable compromises to restore some political order to places such as Syria, Libya and Ukraine. Rather than more and more tough-guy/gal confrontations, maybe there will finally be some serious efforts at reconciliation.

But the other reality is that the interventionist forces have rooted themselves deeply in official Washington, inside NATO, within the mainstream news media and even in European institutions. It will not be easy to rid the world of the grave dangers created by neocon policies.

*This article was excerpted from a longer one that originally appeared at [consortiumnews.com](http://consortiumnews.com).*



KIM HERBST



# VENEZUELA AT AN IMPASSE

## SOCIAL MOVEMENTS TRY TO FILL THE VOID CREATED BY A FALTERING GOVERNMENT

By Z.C. DUTKA

SANTA ELENA DE UAIEN, Venezuela — It used to be that to learn about Venezuela's socialist revolution, the reporting of prominent U.S. newspapers would be about as useful as a solitary photo negative; reduced to light and dark, good and evil, the colors would appear reversed, and the chronology of struggle quietly absent.

But while the undertones of doom have been present for over a decade, this year's 159 percent inflation rate, according to the International Monetary Fund, and a 10 percent decline in the nation's gross domestic product have raised serious questions about the impact of the economic crisis on ordinary Venezuelans and in turn on the government's ability to maintain popular support.

It's true, the economy is shot. In the past year, oil prices tumbled from \$105 per barrel to under \$50, cutting the country's foreign earnings by half. A battered exchange system and booming illegal market has seen the Venezuelan bolívar devalued to the point that the monthly minimum wage was on par with a 36-pack of diapers or a few kilos of dried beans, until President Nicolas Maduro doubled it on October 15.

Car parts are hard to find and vehicles languish in backyards, and between patchy imports and the widespread hoarding and reselling of food by vendors called *bachaqueros* — a reference to leafcutter ants — scarcity has made grocery lists a fool's errand.

Despite the best efforts of the state media apparatus — which is in full campaign mode for the December 6 congressional elections — to ignore these realities, it's impossible not to witness them on the ground.

Across the country, the streets buzz with numbers as friends and strangers compete with stories of outrageous prices: "1,800 bolívares for a kilo of lentils!" "I paid 600 bolos for the taxi home!"

The official exchange rate for the bolívar has remained at 6.3 to one U.S. dollar since February 2013, but its black market value has tumbled from 110 to the dollar in October 2014 to the current rate of 820.

### AN INVISIBLE CATCH-22

*Bachaqueo* has mutated into an invincible catch-22, as many wage-earning families make ends meet with profits from illegal sales while simultaneously driving the cycle of inflation with their cutthroat prices. Meanwhile, as more people get in on the business, the lines outside supermarkets with low, government-regulated prices grow ever longer with hardly anyone buying for themselves.

Yet the telling difference between Chavista complaints and those of the opposition is that the former analyze causes, starting with the country's invariable dependency on oil revenue and a "fast money culture" fomented by the illegal market. For the latter, a tirade of insults against Hugo Chávez, Fidel Castro and Mao Zedong suffices.

The government favors a simplistic defense, accusing the private business sector of sabotage. The Central Bank has avoided releasing any official data on inflation since last year, on the grounds that the country is at war.

Meanwhile, the media chorus against Venezuela has only gotten louder since the March 2013 death of Chávez, the country's charismatic leader, and the ascension of Maduro, his hand-picked successor. Wall Street seizes every opportunity to forecast default, driving up the interest on Venezuelan bonds. Leading companies have ceased production, either from a lack of imported dollars or as an act of deliberate subversion.

Since the government instituted a three-tiered foreign exchange system in 2003, there have been phantom importers manipulating the system, resulting in an accumulated \$300 billion in capital flight. The manipulations also contributed to scarcity, as many of the items being imported on paper were never actually brought into the country.

Over the years, the buying and selling of subsidized U.S. dollars on the illegal market became the most profitable business in the country,

undermining both the program's intent and the national currency.

But are the government's hands tied? Victor Alvarez, an economist and former minister under Chávez, estimated in May that "70 percent [of scarcity and speculation] is due to depletions, deviations and errors in economic policy, while 30 percent is caused by opposing sectors who play at destabilization."

According to Alvarez, currency controls were set in place as a "temporary measure" to reduce dollar dependency, but the government had no "justifiable reason" to maintain them beyond 2006.

Today, the U.S.-based currency-tracking website DolarToday holds the bolívar in a vise. Its publishers can set off rounds of inflation just by raising the price of the black market dollar on a whim, claiming all the while that their calculations reflect the "objective street rate."

Earlier this year, in an attempt to undercut the black market, the government launched Simadi, a free-floating rate starting at 172 bolívares to the dollar. At the time the black market rate was 185.

In the weeks following, DolarToday drove the black market rate out of reach, effectively neutralizing Simadi.

On October 23, the Central Bank filed a lawsuit in the United States against DolarToday for cyberterrorism, demanding that it be made illegal for the site to publish unofficial exchange rates and suing for damages.

While many Venezuelans support the case against the website, leftist critics generally accuse the government of putting more energy into blaming the opposition than into fixing the problems at hand. The lack of official economic data has further alienated Venezuelans who are struggling with inflated prices and don't see the state corroborating their experience.

### CONCRETE SOLUTIONS

However, in the void left by Maduro's inaction, grassroots activists have turned inwards and begun to seek concrete solutions.

With the help of key ministries that continue to grant money to social movements, these activists have become the motor for a renaissance of small-scale production in this oil-dependent nation.

In Guatire, a working-class suburb of the capital city of Caracas, Alejandro Baiz, a young filmmaker, and a group of volunteers have received funding from the Communes and Housing Ministries to remake an abandoned lot into a center of social production called Territorio Caribe.

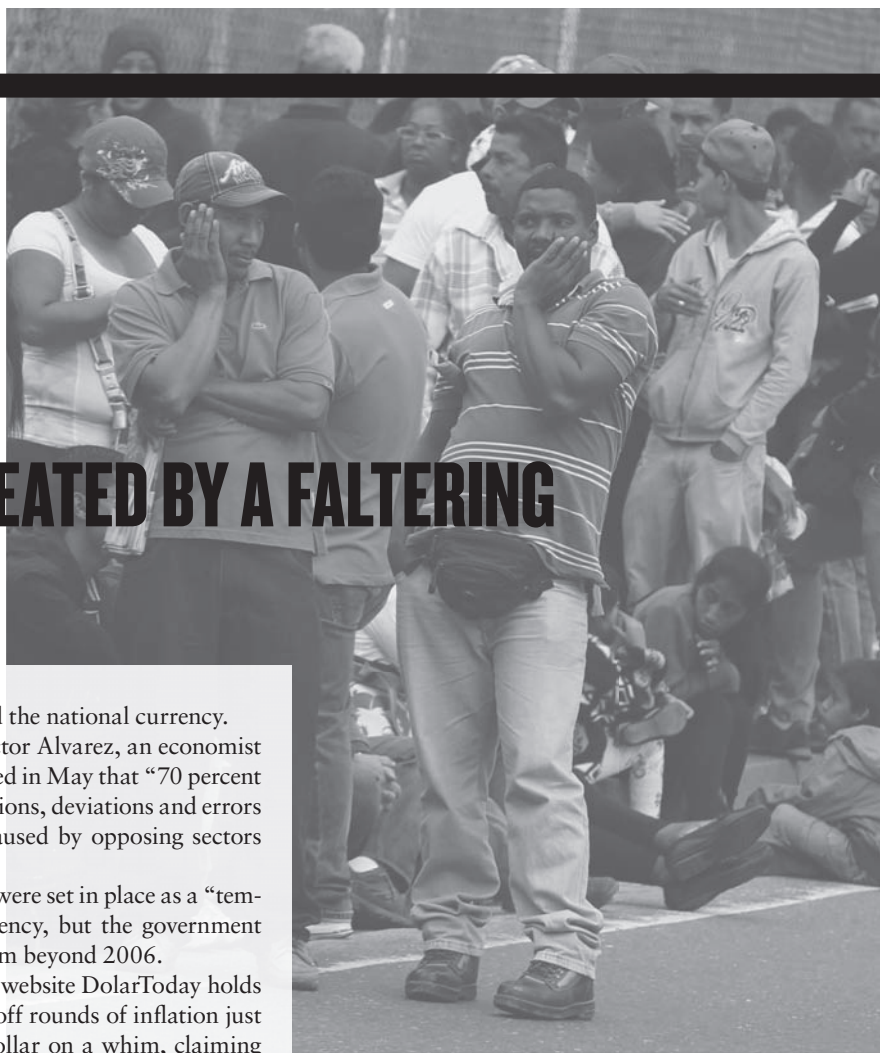
The space now boasts greenhouses where local children learn about urban farming, a community news station and an educational space that offers classes on everything from carpentry to natural childbirth.

The Communes Ministry supports Venezuelans in creating autonomous socialist collectives that emphasize self-sufficiency and self-governance, in accordance with Chávez's dream of gradually replacing the bourgeois state with a communal state. Thousands of these collectives are registered across the country, with the more prolific examples focusing on permaculture and participatory democracy.

"We're not trying to change the world, only create an alternative from our immediate possibilities," Baiz explains.

If *bachaqueros* are the foot soldiers of the economic war, Alejandro and his crew of around 70 volunteers meet them on the proverbial battlefield. By producing homemade soaps, deodorants and shampoos, the people at Territorio Caribe are bringing their communities products most commonly monopolized by *bachaqueros*.

By selling *arepa* flour made from yucca, plantain and taro, they are providing a local alternative to the Harina P.A.N. corn flour produced monopolistically by Empresas Polar, Venezuela's largest private



**ACROSS THE COUNTRY,  
THE STREETS BUZZ WITH  
NUMBERS AS FRIENDS  
AND STRANGERS  
COMPETE WITH STORIES  
OF OUTRAGEOUS  
PRICES.**



corporation.

Farther from the city lights, Gabriel Garcia, 55, keeps busy organizing against genetically modified seeds with help from the Communes Ministry.

Born and raised on the fertile land of Lara State, Gabriel is behind Venezuela's decade-old National Campesino Seed Day and the trailblazing International Seed Forum in 2012 to protect organic seeds native to the Americas.

"But it's not all talking," promises Gabriel. "We put it in practice, we grow our own food out back. We keep seed banks and make sure they are available to growers."

Even with the extra labor involved in organic farming, Gabriel says, all-natural and communally grown produce can be even cheaper than conventional counterparts when the high cost of imported agrochemicals and extensive distribution chains are factored in.

Lara has more communes than any other state and a long tradition of subsistence farming. That has, to some extent, protected the region from food scarcity. With government support, the local communes are currently building defenses against speculation by seeking ways to distribute goods in the state capital of Barquisimeto without intermediaries.

"We've seen more clearly than anyone that the best way to combat the economic war is by producing, by growing, wherever there is free space," Gabriel insists.

But if the revolution loses the next elections, he warned, free space may be harder to come by.

"Landowners and cattle herders, these people have tremendous power and are looking to regain their empire," he said, recalling the segregated and exclusive countryside that existed before Chávez's 1999 constitutional reforms outlawed large rural landholdings.

#### UPCOMING ELECTIONS

The international media has hailed the December 6 elections for the National Assembly as a plebiscite on Maduro, but it is highly unlikely that the opposition will win with a majority wide enough to alter the government agenda. A two-thirds majority is needed to revise constitutional law or petition the Supreme Court for presidential impeachment. A three-quarters majority would be required to remove the vice-president or ministers from office.

A poll conducted by the Caracas-based firm Hinterlaces in July saw 67 percent of Venezuelans agree that the opposition garners votes "because of the discontent in the country, but does not have popular backing."

Aside from a pervasive anti-Chavista sentiment, the opposition coalition MUD (Democratic Unity Roundtable) is composed of a wide range of parties from reactionary to liberal reformist, with no clear leader nor ideological goals to bring them together.

Currently, a pro-government coalition holds just under two-thirds of the 165 congressional seats.

For Rodrigo Acosta, a Chilean

muralist whose family fled the military dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in 1984 only to settle in Venezuela during the neoliberal era that preceded Chávez, an opposition win would mean disaster.

Harkening back to Salvador Allende's brief socialist reign in Chile during the early 1970s, Acosta recalls the rightwing congressional majority that blocked every initiative proposed by Allende's party.

"We have to prepare ourselves to resist," Acosta says, while clarifying that resistance from here onward should come "from within the organized commune."

Now a longtime resident of the Andean city of Merida, Acosta is part of a vibrant campaign that aims to revive Chavista spirit around the country.

Conceived from a symposium of artists from Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Peru and Colombia, the campaign flooded social media recently with evocative designs of anatomical hearts and veins intertwining across Latin America.

The beating heart is a reminder of "the deep sentiment that still unites us," Acosta says.

In the past few years, many Chavistas have experienced a "crisis of morale," he broods. It's a collective exhaustion that "comes from seeing many of the revolution's achievements be abandoned and uncared for."

The goal is to remind people of their role in Venezuela's participatory democracy, and to echo Chávez's parting advice to work together toward a communal state.

"We can't leave everything to the administration, we can't sit and wait for a solution," Acosta avows.

Still, as far as the economy is concerned, there's little indication of when the hard times will end. Many professionals and young artists have left the country in search of better opportunities, leaving devastating gaps in public services. Crime has risen across the board, causing security forces to focus their efforts on blitzes and raids against urban gangs, while the state appears unable to curb petty crime such as *bachaqueo*, even despite strict new laws.

The 2016 budget was unveiled in October with emphasis on diversified trade and punctual debt payments, but with imports dropping, many economists have questioned this approach. And according to budget documents provided to Reuters, the official exchange rate of 6.3 will be carried into the coming year, making it unlikely that the illegal market will be weakened.

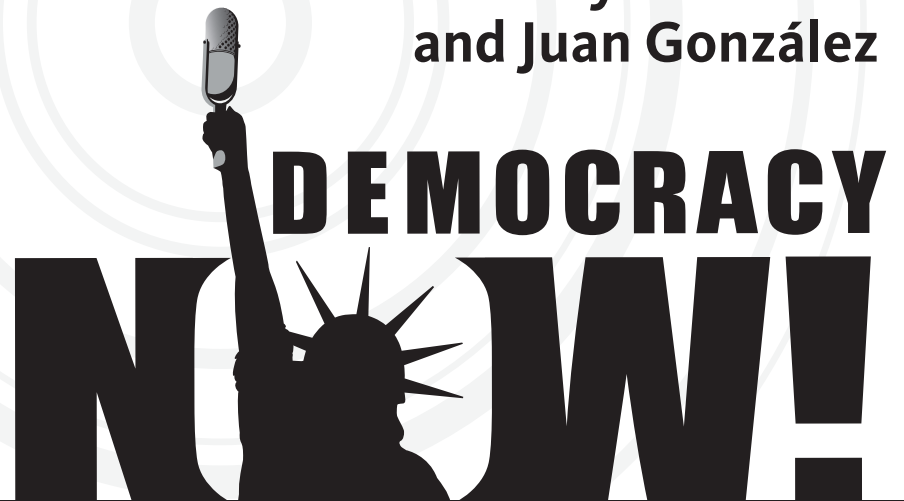
Venezuela's social movements have a history of confronting adversity, but 17 years into the Bolivarian Revolution, the epoch of high-minded ideas bolstered by abundant resources is long gone.

The difference will be made in Venezuela by those who see opportunity in its absence, not the opportunity to profiteer and drive the economy further downward, but the possibility of regeneration.

Z.C. Dutka has lived in Venezuela since 2008 and writes for [venezuelanalysis.com](http://venezuelanalysis.com).

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Twenty scholars of Africa and its diaspora reflect on the similarities and differences between apartheid-era South Africa and contemporary Israel

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- Andy Clarno
- Bill Freund
- Kelly Gillespie
- Ran Greenstein
- Heidi Grunebaum
- Shireen Hassim
- M. Neelika Jayawardane
- Robin D. G. Kelley
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# Apartheid Israel

## The Politics of an Analogy

Jon Soske and Sean Jacobs,  
foreword by Achille Mbembe

“Offering more thoughtful questions than easy answers, this collection of essays aims to redefine our approach to the Israeli system of militarized racial discrimination and its relationship to South African apartheid.”  
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MOVIES

# SCORCHING CAPITALISM

*This Changes Everything*  
DIRECTED BY AVI LEWIS  
KLEIN LEWIS PRODUCTIONS, 2015

By Renée Feltz

As a rule, documentaries about climate change feature exotic scenes, endangered species and Hollywood celebrities. In *This Changes Everything*, Avi Lewis joins with author Naomi Klein to change the script and shape a global discussion on the topic. The film follows Klein as she travels the world to interview activists for what would become her best-selling book of the same name. Among the places she visits is Greece, which is liquidating its natural resources amid an economic crisis and austerity measures that have fallen mostly on the poor.

“You can see all the dimensions of the problem here: how the environment is treated, how the citizens are treated,” says Mary Christianou of the Halkidiki Citizens Committee, which is fighting plans by the Canadian company El Dorado to build a massive gold mine. “You have to realize what is the core problem. Then we can fight it.”

Klein asks her, “What is the core problem?”

“Do you want me to state it on camera?” Christianou responds, sounding both hesitant and emboldened. “I would say it is the economic system. Capitalism.”

Klein elegantly makes this argument in her book, which I have read. But the point is so rarely made that I found the scene as refreshing as if it were my first time hearing it. Perhaps now a broader audience that has yet to read her 576-page opus will feel the satisfying jolt of recognition from openly acknowledging how our global economy is built on unsustainable and endless growth.

Another whiff of fresh air is found in India, where the pursuit of double-digit economic growth is fueled by government subsidies and land grants for private investors to build hundreds of coal-burning power plants. In some areas, residents successfully blocked the construction of the facilities, maintaining their protests despite promises of electricity and jobs. They tell Klein they’d prefer to keep their farms and fishing businesses rather than see a power plant destroy their land and water. They note the facilities would actually provide electricity to industrial centers

hundreds of miles away instead of locally. This is what “environmentalism of the poor” looks like, Klein argues.

The push for developing countries like India and China to build energy infrastructure as they grow is often

blamed for slowing down negotiations on the U.N. climate agreement that have been under way for the last 20 years and are set to conclude this December at talks in Paris. But as charts flash on the screen showing the number of polluted air quality days in China’s major cities, Klein notes the factories burping carbon are often producing goods for Western consumers.

Like polar bears, solutions are a key part of any climate change documentary. By calling out capitalism’s role, Klein and Lewis have a chance to broaden the climate justice movement and sharpen its focus. The steps are clear to the indigenous activists they feature, who use blockades to keep tar sands oil in the ground; to the Germans they follow, who reject nuclear power and create electricity cooperatives sourced by renewable energy; and to the economist they interview, who argues we “need a different growth system.”

In her book, Klein argues the best way to push forward with cuts to carbon emissions that contribute to climate change is for both “de-growth” of the carbon-intensive parts of the economy and expansion of the low-carbon parts, among which she counts health care and education. In the film, she talks to a Canadian tar sands worker who describes how he and many of his fellow roustabouts dream of building and installing wind turbines and other renewable energy projects instead. Afterward, she optimistically reflects how their vision melts away the false dichotomies of jobs versus the environment, and the economy versus the planet.

At minimum, the release of this film in theaters, combined with community and educational screenings, will invigorate those who are aware but feel hopeless and embolden grassroots organizers and foot soldiers. Will it similarly push governments and the bureaucrats at the climate talks in Paris to finally break with the market fundamentalism the movie decries? That could “change everything,” it argues. But it is up to us to demand it.

For more information, see [thefilm.this-changeseverything.org](http://thefilm.this-changeseverything.org).

**UP IN SMOKE:** Burning sugarcane field in El Salvador. Still from *This Changes Everything*.





# CLOUDED MEMORIES, UNNAMED TRAUMA, CONFUSION & RUPTURES

Walid Raad  
MUSEUM OF MODERN ART  
THROUGH JANUARY 31

By Mike Newton

Individual wars are always complex, and yet war itself can, sometimes, feel like something simple or pure. In *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*, Chris Hedges writes of how “war makes the world understandable, a black-and-white tableau of them and us.” Tales of noble, virtuous wars are mixed into the bedrock of religious traditions — in the New Testament, for example, Christ rides a white horse out of heaven, “and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” As aphorized by the sinister Judge Holden in novelist Cormac McCarthy’s *Blood Meridian*, “War is the truest form of divination. ... War is god.”

But if you want to talk about something complex, take a look at the Lebanese Civil War. That conflict lasted for 16 years, from 1975 to 1991, and involved a grim cornucopia of sectarian and secular militias, religious groups, political parties and other countries fighting out proxy wars. For Lebanese artist Walid Raad, the war has always been a subject of fascination. As a child growing up in late-1970s Beirut, Raad collected bullets and shrapnel after days of fighting, keeping detailed notes of where wartime detritus was found and what colors the bullet tips were (bullet manufacturers use colors to identify their products). These detailed notes would eventually form the basis of *Let's be honest, the weather helped* (1998-2006), a series of printed notebook pages in which brightly colored dots representing the found bullets are overlaid on gritty black-and-white photos of the sites of conflict. The end result falls somewhere between scientific reportage, grade-school homework and avant-garde collage. On a nearby wall in Raad's current survey exhibition — up now at the Museum of Modern Art — there's *We Decided to Let Them Say "We are Convinced" Twice (It was More Convincing this Way)* (1982-2007), which covers some similar ground. For this series, Raad revisited photos of Israel's 1982 siege of Beirut that he shot when he was 15. Though the negatives were “carefully preserved,” the prints are mottled and hazy with strange pink and blue coronae, as if a dark energy had been bearing down on them while in storage.

Or, maybe not. The aforementioned works are part of Raad's remarkable long-term project *The Atlas Group* (1989-2004), in which he positioned himself as not so much an artist as an archivist

or historian presenting mysterious documents rescued from a lost era. This framework is fictitious, and within it the material — evidence, so to speak — becomes unstable. Did a prepubescent boy really keep such handsome, meticulously compiled notebooks? What are the unnamed disturbances that added corrosive color to those black-and-white negatives? Is it really true that the monochrome blue photos of *Secrets in the Open Sea* (1994) were not only discovered under wartime rubble, but also contain latent images of men and women who drowned in the Mediterranean over the course of the war? And, did the video known as *I Only Wish That I Could Weep* (2002) really come from a Lebanese Army officer who, instead of doing his job videotaping pedestrians on a seaside boardwalk, decided to train his camera on the sun as it set, slowly, over the ocean?

More recently, Raad has turned his attention to art history and the art world, specifically in the context of wealthy Mideast cities embracing the globalized art market. Here, Raad presents documentary materials such as floor plans, postcards and financial documents with a bristling current of bizarreness: He tells of objects that have somehow ceased to reflect light or cast shadows, and of messages sent telepathically from the future. In a performative exhibition walkthrough that Raad is doing throughout the show's run, he (or perhaps a lookalike actor playing Raad?) speaks of how colors are forever altered by war, and tells the story of how his own artwork shrank down to dollhouse size when he tried to exhibit it in Beirut's first Western-style “white cube” gallery.

This tension between fact and fiction is at the core of Raad's practice. It often feels as if Raad's art has emerged from a parallel plane: a world similar to our own, but with some intractable discord at work. It's a kind of estrangement that, perhaps, reflects the incompatibilities between civil society and life during wartime, rendering the state of war as one of perpetual alienation and remoteness.

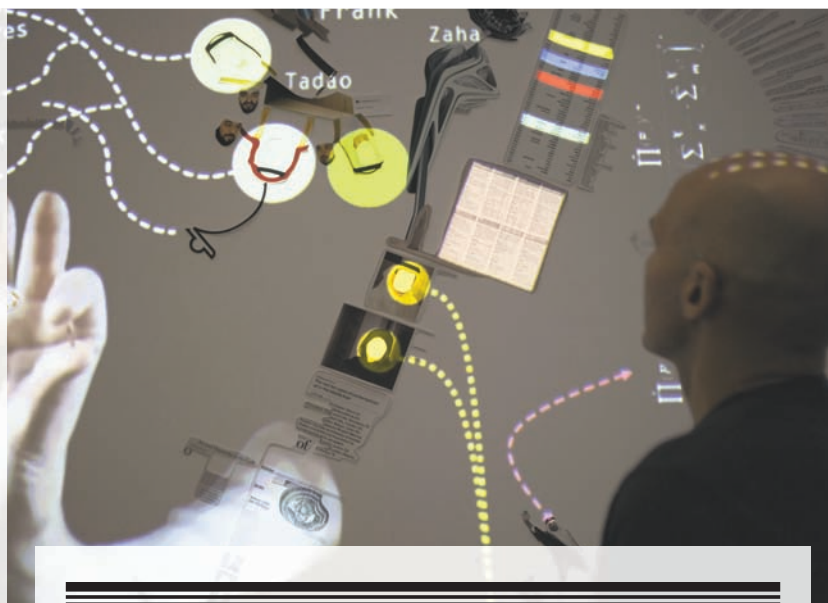
This art, then, is a challenge to the concept of war as a wellspring of noble heroism, or as a site of truth or divinity. War is clouded memories, unnamed trauma, confusion and ruptures that can only be understood in retrospect, if that. The Lebanese Civil War began when Raad was about 8 years old, so we can assume that for him, coming to know the world also meant coming to know the war. This art tells us that war is something that cannot — and should not — be known.



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JULIETA CERVANTES / COURTESY MOMA

The Atlas Group/ Walid Raad. *Hostage: The Bachar tapes (English version)*, 2001. © 2015 Walid Raad

The Atlas Group/ Walid Raad. *Let's be honest, the weather helped\_ Saudi Arabia*, 1998/2006. © 2015 Walid Raad

Walid Raad. *Scratching on things I could disavow: Walkthrough*, 2015. © 2015 The Museum of Modern Art.



## CHAIN LETTER

*Between the World and Me*

By TA-NEHISI COATES  
SPIEGEL & GRAU, 2015

*Letter to Jimmy*

By ALAIN MABANCKOU  
TRANSLATED BY SARA MELI ANSARI  
SOFT SKULL PRESS, 2014

By Bennett Baumer

**T**he Black Lives Matter movement offers a scathing, clear-eyed assessment of racism, unjust policing and mass incarceration in the United States. This should be welcomed. However, when two movement activists disrupted a Bernie Sanders rally in Seattle in August, a largely white progressive crowd hissed and booed and weeks of furious debates followed on social media.

To those who booed or found themselves shaking their heads at Black Lives Matter tactics: read journalist Ta-Nehisi Coates' *Between the World and Me*.

*Between the World and Me* is an open letter to Coates' adolescent son about the nature of America's social relations and a deeply personal engaging work. The left utilizes the phrase "institutional racism" to describe systemic racial discrimination and denial of opportunity that is ongoing and destructive — Coates crystallizes the jargon and uses the

word "plunder." Coates writes that his young son has not yet "discovered the plunder everywhere around us," and then goes on to trace it, from slavery through bad schools to present-day police killings of Black Americans.

What Black Lives Matter and Coates say is unfortunately not new. The Confederate flag symbolizes white supremacy and the South's support of chattel slavery. Educational disparities encompass everything from Black students getting disciplined more often to higher dropout rates and lower school funding. Black men are 21 times more likely to be killed by police than white males and a Black baby born in 1991 has a 30 percent chance of going to prison someday.

*Between the World and Me* is unique because of Coates' tone. Coates does not evoke the Black church and is not religious. "You must resist the common urge toward the comforting narrative of divine law, toward fairy tales that imply some irrepressible justice," he writes. "The enslaved were not bricks in your road, and their lives were not chapters in your redemptive history."

*Between the World and Me* has its tender moments but overall is not a particularly uplifting book. A sharp critic of President Obama, Coates is not buying hope and change. Surveying the United

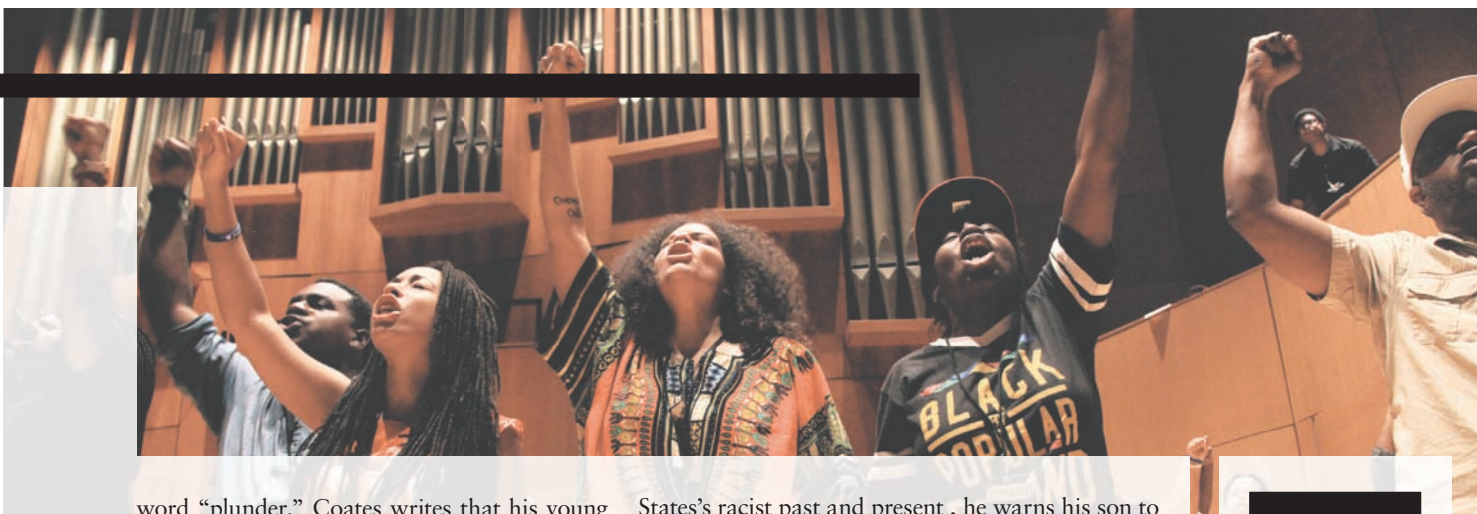
States's racist past and present, he warns his son to expect more of the same even if the future comes branded as being "post-racial."

"Dreamers are pillaging Ferguson for municipal governance," he writes, flipping the script on the American Dream à la Malcolm X. "Dreamers are quoting Martin Luther King and exulting non-violence for the weak and the biggest guns for the strong."

Nobel laureate Toni Morrison has compared Coates' unflinching writing on the subject of race to that of James Baldwin. Like Coates, Baldwin also had a gift for writing essays in letter form, as he did with "My Dungeon Shook — Letter to My Nephew on the One Hundredth Anniversary of Emancipation." And now Baldwin is the posthumous recipient of a trove of imagined letters from Congolese expat writer Alain Mabanckou.

In *Letter to Jimmy*, recently translated from French to English, Mabanckou, who lives in Paris and California, ponders Baldwin's place and time, including his religious upbringing and subsequent rejection of Christianity and choice to flee the United States's pervasive racism to live in Paris and embrace his homosexuality.

*Continued on next page*



LAYLAH AMATULLAH BARRAYN

**CELEBRATING BLACK-NESS:** Attendees at the inaugural Movement for Black Lives Convergence in Cleveland this summer.

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# FROM 15TH CENTURY BACKWATER TO GLOBAL EMPIRE

*Why Did Europe Conquer the World?*

PHILIP T. HOFFMAN

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015

By Don Jackson

Why did Europe conquer the world? It is a powerful question asked by economist and historian Philip T. Hoffman in his recent book of the same name. It is even more significant when one considers that as recently as the year 1500, it seemed so unlikely. And yet, the effects of European conquest cannot be understated. According to Hoffman, by 1914, Europe controlled 84 percent of the globe — an area home to the vast majority of humanity. Europe's conquest of the world, Hoffman argues, ultimately led to the Industrial Revolution and the wholesale devastation of cultures and communities.

Hoffman is an economist at heart — looking at the present day, he references “plausible econometric evidence” linking European conquest to contemporary poverty in Africa and Latin America. But beyond the economic figures is a human cost that is still being paid. The European killing, displacement and subjugation of peoples worldwide over hundreds of years has irrevocably ripped social fabrics and traumatized generations.

In the 10th century, China, Japan, the Muslim Middle East and South Asia were all more advanced than Europe. Any of these powers could have risen to dominate the world. So why Europe?

Hoffman is not the first to labor over this question. In *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers* (1987), Yale historian Paul Kennedy proposed that Europe gained ascendancy because of the combination of military advances gained from inter-European rivalries and the technological innovation and economic growth that resulted from competitive markets. Scholar Jared Diamond, meanwhile, argued in *Guns, Germs and Steel* (1997) that Europe was able to dominate because of environmental factors that precipitated technological advantage

and immunity from certain endemic diseases.

Hoffman has a different take on the success of European conquest. His reasons are gunpowder technology, “tournament conditions” between European powers and most important,

political history.

Gunpowder technology encompasses a lot more than its name suggests. Sure, it refers to the weapons — firearms, artillery, ships armed with guns and fortifications that could resist bombardment. But it also includes the tactics and methods of organization designed to get the most out of the weapons as well as the training that transforms ordinary men into soldiers, forging them into “an imposing fighting force willing to operate with speed and discipline even when under fire.”

With the term “tournament,” Hoffman is describing, in essence, a competition. He argues that the collective prizes of wealth, territorial expansion, defense of the Christian faith and the glory of victory created a win-at-all-costs mentality. It meant that Europe's fragmented powers were constantly fighting each other, which led them to spend heavily on war while pushing to improve gunpowder technology, even if it harmed their economies.

Ultimately, Hoffman credits political history as the major cause of Europe's conquest of much of the rest of the world. For centuries, Europe's monarchic leaders saw the waging of war as their principal duty. Winning the tournament meant excellence — but it was not until the French Revolution and the Napoleonic period that losing posed any significant political risk.

As far as political history goes, the privatization of war was also uniquely European. European leaders gave gunpowder technology to private entrepreneurs, who then used it to establish settlements and colonies as well as to prey on and pirate foreign trade. As overseas conquest became more and more profitable, individuals and companies were further incentivized to conquer and colonize.

The political history of other potential world conquerors, meanwhile, was different. The Ottomans' practice of Islamic



GARY MARTIN

## LETTER

*Continued from previous page*

“You saw how churches operated, whether they were white or black churches. You saw that certain ministers became rich at the expense of the faithful, who are always asked to give more ... everything is squeezed out, down to the last cent.”

Published in 1963, Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time* was panned as extreme and anti-white by many white liberals, while *Between the World and Me* has generated mostly praise, though it too refuses to genuflect before white sensibilities. Both authors know race is a social construct but that no one can wish it away with broad proclamations of a post-racial society or the dim-

witted “All Lives Matter” slogan.

Black Lives Matter is a dynamic force for racial justice, though Coates is bearish on this country's ability to transcend its racist history. Baldwin participated in the March on Washington and aligned himself with various civil rights groups, though he disavowed being a civil rights activist and later in life described the movement as “the latest slave

rebellion.” Writing to Baldwin across the decades, Mabankou sums up his adopted home like this: “America is no fool: it has heard your message. But can it follow your lead?”



## November/December EVENTS 2015

marxedproject.org

TUESDAY • NOVEMBER 17 • 7:00 pm

### KILLING TRAYVONS:

*An Anthology of American Violence*



**Ibrahim Diallo** is a native of Guinea, West Africa. He moved to Brooklyn at the age of 12. He is a contributing author to *Killing Trayvons*.

**Kevin Alexander Gray** is a civil rights organizer in South Carolina and author of *Waiting for Lightning to Strike! The Fundamentals of Black Politics* (CounterPunch/AK Press). He is a co-editor of *Killing Trayvons*.

**Joann Wypijewski** is a writer and editor based in New York. Her work has appeared in many magazines, including *The Nation* and *CounterPunch*, where she writes a monthly column, “Diamonds & Rust.” She is a co-editor of *Killing Trayvons*.

MONDAY • NOVEMBER 30 • 8:00 pm

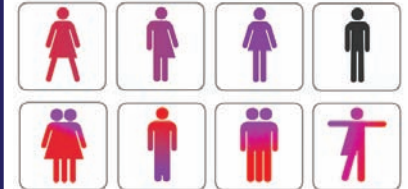
### EXPULSIONS: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy



**Saskia Sassen** is the Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology at Columbia University. Her research and writing focuses on the social, economic and political dimensions of globalization, immigration, global cities, and changes within the liberal state that result from current transnational conditions.

WEDNESDAY • DECEMBER 2 • 7:30 pm

### SOLIDARITY & FULFILLING HUMAN NEEDS



**Eva von Redecker** is based at the Philosophy Department of Humboldt-University, Berlin. In fall of 2015, she's the Heuss Lecturer at the New School for Social Research. Her work is in critical theory and focuses on topics such as history, revolution, gender, sexuality and property.

Above events: \$6 / \$10 / \$15 each  
No one turned away for inability to pay

3 WEDNESDAYS

DECEMBER 2, 9, 16 • 7:30 pm

### DIALECTICS WORKSHOP



**Alex Steinberg** taught three classes at The Commons: *Engels and the Dialectics of Nature* during the Spring of 2014, *Dialectics of Nature and the Multiverse* in the fall of 2014 and a class on *Nietzsche, Heidegger, Fascism and Left-Nietzscheans* last Spring.  
Cost: \$25 / \$35 / \$45 (sliding scale)

SUNDAY • DECEMBER 6 • NOON - 8:00 PM

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